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By *MW* NARA Date *11/19/14*

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : PARIS, RABAT, TUNIS, TRIPOLI

FROM : Amembassy ALGIERS

DATE: April 14, 1969

SUBJECT : The Krim Belkacem Trial and its Impact on U.S.-Algerian Relations.

REF :

The Algerian Revolution Devours more of its Children

On April 7 the Revolutionary Court in Oran passed sentence on some 60 persons accused of conspiring against the security of the Algerian state. The most prominent Algerian on trial was Belkacem Krim, historic figure of the Algerian revolution, principal negotiator of the Evian agreements with France, and since October 1967, head of the opposition MDRA (Mouvement Democratique pour le Renouveau Algerien). The Court sentenced Krim, Tamsaout Belkacem, and Amirat Slimane to death, the former two in absentia. 17 of the 60 defendants were reportedly released. The others received punishment ranging from life to suspended sentences. Details are given in enclosure 1, an account of the Court's verdict as published in the Oran newspaper, La Republique.

Serious Accusations of U.S. Complicity

The high point of the trial was the testimony of "surprise witness" Akli Belahssen, one of Krim's top lieutenants, who flew from Marseille to Oran on April 5 in order to testify at the Court. Belahssen, who said he was in charge of external and press affairs for the MDRA, made a series of serious accusations of USG involvement in Belkacem Krim's opposition organization. According to local press accounts, he testified that:

- After contacts at the American Embassy in Paris, American services agreed to provide funds for Belkacem Krim's opposition movement.

- Michel Leroy, a Krim agent, was received by a high State Department official in Washington.

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- American services provided bombs and explosives of a kind "only at CIA disposition", suggested the training of commando teams to destroy Algerian military airports, and approved a new "draft constitution" and list of personalities to form a new government.

Details of Belahssen's testimony as printed in La Republique of April 6-7 are given in Enclosure 2. Belahssen, by the way, got off with a two-year suspended sentence.

Impact on US-Algerian Relations

These serious accusations of U.S. involvement in internal Algerian affairs come at a time when there has been a steady improvement in U.S.-Algerian relations. The most recent sign occurred when President Eisenhower died March 28. Algerian President Houari Boumediene sent a message of condolences to President Nixon, the first communication between the GOA and the USG at this level since the break of relations in June 1967.

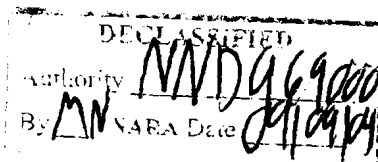
How then should the charges made at Oran be interpreted? As a new period of decline in US-Algerian relations or as a genuine "incident de parcours"? We tend to believe that the business in Oran was an aberration and that the GOA still remains interested in the gradual improvement of relations with the U.S.

A number of diplomatic and other sources have expressed the view that the publishing of Belahssen's testimony is part of Boumediene's internal political balancing act, that a number of Algerians in the Party and elsewhere remain chronically suspicious of U.S. intentions and this was the regime's way of tossing them a bone. These same sources also pointed out that strong intimations of involvement by French and Egyptian secret services were also voiced at the trial. Of course these accusations were much less precise. The U.S. is still the easiest and biggest scapegoat available to Algeria. Finally, the Oran trial served a useful domestic purpose--to warn the Algerian public of the harsh punishment which the GOA will mete out to anyone involved in opposition activities.

For what it is worth, the Algerian press made hay of Belahssen's testimony for two days after the trial ended. Then the press campaign was abruptly turned off--as neatly as a water tap.

Perhaps most important as an indicator was the reaction of Layachi Yaker, the number three Foreign Ministry official, when I called upon him to express the concern and displeasure of the USG. Yaker made three points in reply: 1) the GOA had no doubt about the authenticity of the contacts by the opposition group with CIA and other Americans, since they were supported by details of time, place, etc.; 2) that these contacts took place during the Johnson administration, a period of

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special difficulty in US-Algerian relations; and 3) the GOA nevertheless looked forward with much hope to the absence of such contacts during the present American administration.

Yaker then made a special point of repeating the language which he had used during the December visit of Deputy Assistant Secretary Quimby, Bureau of African Affairs: The GOA will do all that it can to improve bilateral relations and therefore looks with hope to a favorable evolution of the Middle East and Vietnamese situations.

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se fait l'indiciaire de la justice de son pays, en exécutant les sentences.

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yeux qui se sont égarés, d'écarter plus que l'effaire à dépeindre par